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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2019
TAGS: BO NATO PREL
SUBJECT: GUIDANCE ON EAPC MEETING INVITATION TO BELARUS
DEFMIN

REF: A. (A) USNATO 230
 1B. (B) JUNE 3 HAMILTON (EUR/RPM) - GREANEY E-MAILS

Classified By: EUR/RPM Bruce Turner Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) While the Department understands Post's concerns as outlined in REF A, Department does NOT/NOT authorize the transmission of the proposed text. The Department requests USNATO to stand by previous instructions (REF B) -- we support Belarusian participation in the EAPC Defense Ministerial at the deputy defense minister level. An invitation at the Defense Minister level would imply a return to business as usual with Belarus, which should not be on the table.

12. (C/NF) Department understands that Allies are interested in reaching out to Belarus but also notes that Belarus has not requested to attend the EAPC meetings. We are prepared to make limited gestures to the Belarusians without reciprocity, including going ahead with the NATO Security Information Agreement. However, inviting the Defense Minister now would be a major step at a time when the Belarusians have to date shown no sign of taking any positive steps to address others' concerns. Several Allies' capitals admit that positive change in the past year has been extremely limited. In short, such a step is not yet justified.

13. (SBU) USNATO is requested to share the expanded points below with NATO allies as necessary:

-- The United States appreciates our Allies' concerns about Belarus and shares Allies' interest in engaging Belarus.

-- We remain concerned about the Belarusian regime's hostile comments about NATO and believe it is premature to move forward with an invitation to Belarus at the defense minister level for the EAPC Defense Ministerial.

-- An invitation to the deputy defense minister -- a break from NATO's past practice of inviting Belarus at the O-6 equivalent level and below -- will allow us to gauge Belarus' interest in substantively engaging with NATO.

-- At this stage an invitation appears unjustified, as Belarus has neither sought an invitation nor indicated an interest in taking steps to encourage one.

-- We have made clear to the Belarusian authorities that we are open to discussions with them and we will adjust our policy toward Belarus as appropriate.

CLINTON